

Summary of Council Member Interviews

In an effort to strengthen CCJBH operations, engagement and outcomes, staff committed to discussing council priorities and recommendations for improvements with each council member and produce a summary to share with the Council. Staff interviewed the following council members: Brenda Grealish, Danitza Pantoja, Jessica Cruz, Judge Manley, Mack Jenkins, Matt Garcia, Stephanie Clendenin, Tony Hobson, and Tracy Whitney. Below is a summary of questions and responses from the interview process.

What is your number one priority for the council?

- Quality community behavioral health is critical to reentry and the stability for the justice-involved with behavioral health and SUD challenges.
- Youth released from juvenile hall must have residential care with case management and health care services available upon release.
- Pre-trial mental health diversion must include building capacity to support people with behavioral health challenges/SUD and their families, so they do not get into the criminal justice system in the first place.
- Build capacity for pre-trial mental health diversion. Must build capacity to support reentry out of jails and prisons. Currently there is not enough housing and treatment available at discharge.
- Reentry from state custody with identifying behavioral health issue must be a partnership between behavioral health and corrections to improve outcomes and lives.
- Building capacity for community-based care for pre-trial mental health diversion and other reentry.
- Jail for housing is not an answer to homelessness. CA must solve this problem. Improving housing outcomes for the justice-involved with behavioral health and SUD challenges must be solved now.
- Pre-trial mental health diversion must support best practices and build capacity.
- CCJBH must keep track of the impact of COVID and adjust priorities as needed.
- Build capacity for closer supervision and monitoring from parole/probation, so justice-involved with mental health challenges are identified early and caseloads can be managed more closely. Enhance emergency room involvement by community groups to provide warm handoff. Invest in community resources to support diversion.

What is working at the council meetings?

- The meetings are well organized with the information available on the website.
- The workshops are excellent.
- The speakers and panelists discuss relevant topics and best practices.
- Good dialogue at the workshops but need more interaction at the council meetings.
- Like the speakers from the community to learn how the community is meeting the needs of people with behavioral health challenges/SUD and their families.
- Like learning from the data analysis, so CCJBH can promote best practices.
- Meeting documents posted on the website prior to meetings are comprehensive and helpful.

What is not working at the council meetings?

- Meeting content is good but need more interaction.
- Need to identify next steps for the council after the workshops.
- Change the agenda to focus more on current updates.
- More presentations from the people doing the work and discussion on the impact.
- Unclear about the role and expectations for each council member.
- The meeting content is so dense with information, it is difficult to process. Council members need time to break.
- Workgroups could be helpful to get more done and engage member.
- Develop a 3-year strategic plan with action items to help organize the work.
- More speakers, shorter summaries, and time for council members to discuss and vote.
- Need to meet monthly to stay current and focused on the immediate problems and solutions.
- Need clarity on the annual legislative report process. The council could work to collectively select the recommendations and develop next steps after the council approves the recommendations.
- Utilize the members' expertise by providing more time for the members to ask questions and present at the meetings.
- Represent the diversity of the state by including best practice presentations on different local implementation issues and include smaller counties and rural areas.
- Need less operational discussions and a more linear approach to action items.

What policy issues to discuss more at the meeting? What policy issues to discuss less?

- More on reentry strategies and less on lived experience. How does it tie into housing? Need clarification on connection.
- More information on impact of early releases including juveniles.
- Connect workshops back to the Council strategic plan. Hear more from each Council member and learn about the areas they represent. Develop recommendations on best practices or ideal diversion programs for each county. Examine whether or not counties have Behavioral Health Courts and what types and always. Remember to include the families.
- Policy problems to urgently discuss and recommend solutions (1) since mental hospitals cannot discharge people to the streets, why not apply this rule to jail discharge. People discharged from jail at 3 AM have nowhere to go. (2) More juveniles in the system have behavioral health issues and some acute. There are insufficient treatment and residential facilities available in the community.
- Priorities should stay with the CCJBH mission to strengthen the working relationships between behavioral health and corrections. Provide more training featuring best practices, sponsor more collaboration, and produce products that demonstrate CCJBH successful efforts to strengthen the relationship between behavioral health and corrections.
- Work more with district attorneys and judges in the small counties and rural areas on diversion training. Use more problem-solving formats, for example how to solve medical issues for people in the jails.
- Due to COVID-19 and more people on the streets as a result of jail releases and homelessness, the council must keep current on critical needs of justice-involved with behavioral health challenges.

How do you want to contribute to the council? What is missing in council member engagement?

- More engagement through a communication plan. Simplify the newsletter with a clear top line-- what we need to know so it is easy to find, less information density and more sound-bites/highlights.

Format the newsletter so it is easy to read, and then the council member will distribute the messages. The more detailed information can be included with links.

- Want to know what CCJBH expects from members and this can help with engagement. Available to advocate more with local representatives and others in coordination with CCJBH.
- More strategic, actionable items that engage the council members.
- Engage the council members more on specific issues. Meetings can be fact finding and conducted by the council separate from the quarterly meetings. Need to meet more often to discuss current status and hear updates in real time on specific issues. Immediate housing for justice-involved with behavioral health issues is a critical problem in need of an urgent solution. We can use zoom and other teleconference options to facilitate more timely meetings.
- Create more opportunities for council members to share expertise at council meetings and opportunities to suggest/challenge every council member to be prepared to present at the meetings. Create space for the council members to speak from their unique expertise. Give the council members more opportunities to contribute to the great work.
- More engagement with council members for agenda setting, surveys and more requests for feedback. How about CCJBH work to increase the number of behavioral health experts trained in and interested in working with our population, need to enhance post-secondary education, and increase Family therapists and social workers in this field.
- Council meetings are about informing. Structure for more dialogue so council members are not just informed, but also, are informing others, perhaps in a brain storming format. Leverage council members more, perhaps on the annual report or other activities. Meet more often with shorter duration so council members can stay informed and share what is happening on the ground in their areas.